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Lattimore

The sun lays down patterns on a Kashgar street.

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A Kashgar mosque where the faithful turn for rest and prayer.

The market place is important for the exchange of wares and news in Kashgar.

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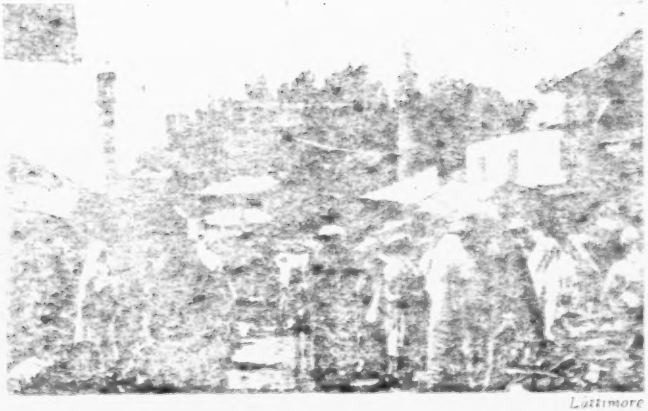

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CHAPTER XXXV

FROM DOVE TOWER TO HAMI

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THE oasis of 'Dove Tower' proved to be somewhat larger than those which we had recently passed. It even boasted a little shop where one could purchase matches, cigarettes, tobacco, small-sized face towels, incense, and the poorest quality of the paper articles required for temple worship. This shop was also the post-office, though it provided neither stamps nor post-cards; it kept, however, a surprisingly good stock of medicinal plants and opium. The few inns which composed the village were built at the foot of a high, overhanging cliff riddled with holes, in which wild doves built their nests. Flocks of these birds were always flying across the face of the cliff, their wings shining in the sunlight as though covered with silver and their feathers with yellow gold. The heat reflected from the cliff was intense, and we were glad to find the inn room to be windowless, and depending entirely for ventilation on a small hole in the roof. This type of room at first sight seems to be devoid of any single element of comfort, for on entering the traveller finds himself in a dark apartment scarcely larger than a cupboard. Apart from a narrow passage, the whole floor space is occupied by a mud *kang*. In place of a ceiling the roof is lined with dried grass, indescribably filthy and coated with a black deposit from the heavy smoke of the smouldering manure, and which grass gradually loosens and hangs down but a few feet from the sleeper's face. A small round hole in the roof, about the size of an ordinary stove-pipe, supplies the ventilation and one ray of daylight, for as there is no window, on closing the

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this oasis on his son, Chagatai, and Hami has never ceased to be ruled by a succession of Khans, who at the present day are wise enough to recognise the suzerainty of China, and thus avoid the friction which would be caused by any rebellious policy. At a little distance stood another walled city which contained the Chinese Yamen barracks and garrison, and where a good portion of the Chinese population reside. Outside, between and around these two enclosures, were the busy streets and covered bazaars, forming a business quarter for both Chinese and Turki. Some splendid parks, through which ran a wide canal, flanked the Huei Huei [1] city. Every available acre of land adjacent to the town was used for intensive market-gardening, and beyond this, to the very edge of the oasis (which stretched seven miles to north and south, and five miles to east and west), the land was brought under cultivation by Turki farmers.

As usual, we took the first opportunity of calling on the wives of our landlord. They occupied certain inner courtyards, well furnished and decorated with flowers both cut and growing. The harem contained the regulation number of four wives, and a goodly company of children, as well as a widowed relative and her daughter.

The girls wore gay dresses made in one piece, slit at the neck by a hole, through which the head passed, and which was then tied in on either shoulder. Even the smallest girls wore their dresses to the ankle. A veil, usually of white muslin, but in some cases made of coloured silk, covered the head and fell to the knees. It concealed the hands, and when in mixed company was held up and adroitly manipulated, so as to be drawn across the face or withdrawn at will. The women's

[1] Huei Huei, the Chinese word for Moslem.

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faces were not veiled, and they seemed to have considerable freedom. The flowing, white drapery adds greatly to the beauty of these tall, dark, handsome creatures, and affords full play for coquettish movements and tantalising concealment when once curiosity has been aroused. In the younger women a thick line of black joined the eyebrows over the bridge of the nose, and the face was framed by two long, shining plaits hanging over the breast. The feet were bare, and when indoors were thrust into a heel-less slipper, but when walking out of doors top-boots were usually worn, and sometimes blue velvet socks embroidered with sequins. The whole dress is finished off with a round, brimless cap, which worn over the veil keeps it in place. Hami has its own peculiar style, shape and decoration of the cap, and the initiated can distinguish it in a moment from the designs used in other cities.

Ever since the name of Hami has been known to the European nations, it has carried with it the report of the extraordinary hospitality of its people, and at the present day travellers may still count upon a friendly reception by its inhabitants. This is doubtless due in part to its peculiar geographical position, which might be compared with that of a lonely island in a wide sea, only that here the oasis is an island of green in the ocean of sand. The produce of this terraced and well-watered region is more than sufficient to supply its own population, and its parks, its streams and flowers, as well as the abundance of its vegetables and fruits, amply justified the name of the 'earthly paradise,' by which it had been described to us in Suchow.

The streets and bazaars fascinated us. Here were gathered men from all parts of Asia, mixing freely in the crowded thoroughfares, yet curiously segregated as to their respective trades and lines of commerce.

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All the market-gardeners were Chihli men, and spoke of themselves as coming from Tientsin; the banks and money-shops were in the hands of Shansi people; coppersmiths and travelling pedlars were from Honan; and the riveter of broken china was always ready to speak of his distant Szchuan home. Even in the quality of the goods sold the racial divisions were precise. Finely-woven cottons, silks, and the more delicate materials were handled exclusively by the Chinese, but the gorgeous and barbaric striped cottons, carpets, rugs, saddle-bags and all woollen goods were sold by the Turki. The Chantow showed a most attractive *étalage* of golden-crusted breadstuffs, by the side of which the anaemic steamed roll of the Chinese presented no attraction. The fruit and vegetables, though grown by the Chinese, were sold in Turki shops, whose stalls were filled with carrots, egg-plant, and several varieties of French beans, including one in which the pod was over a foot long and circular in shape. Vegetable marrows were in such profusion as to warrant an old name for Hami—'The Oasis of the Gourd.' Onions, juicy green peppers as large as oranges, celery, lettuce and cucumbers were in profusion, but peas and broad beans were not grown by the Tientsin market-gardeners, they were sown in the fields by the Chantow farmer, and viewed not as vegetables for the board of the epicure but as fodder for animals.

The season was too early for much fruit, but a small apple was procurable, and the first ripe melons were in the market. The best quality of melon known in Turkestan bears the name of 'Hami,' and is a large fruit of the netted order, the flesh being firm and sometimes white, but more frequently orange-tinted, and of superb flavour. The water-melon (*Citrullus vulgaris*)

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We left Muleiho as soon as the weather permitted. Our Shansi friends were round early to see how we had fared, and to bring us a parting present of a slab of brick-tea, one foot wide by one and a half feet long, and two inches thick—a most decorative object, being stamped with handsome patterns. Brick-tea is much used in the North-West. A small chunk is broken off and boiled in a kettle of water, making an infusion which is of a pale colour and nearly tasteless. The bricks are made from the used leaves of the tea-shops, sun-dried and pressed into a cake.

The next two days took us past Chitai—'Great Height'—where we stayed in the suburb, the town itself being nothing but a mass of ruins inside a good castellated wall. We took our next stage by day, crossing the area which had received the full force of the cloud-burst on Sunday night. On every hand we saw the traces of the havoc wrought. Bridges were swept away, trees uprooted and crops ruined, and we were told that a large number of cattle had been drowned, as the rushing mountain torrent burst its bounds and had overtaken the herds before their owners could get them to a place of safety. From Chitai we came to Kucheng—'Ancient City'—which unlike Hami is not surrounded on all sides with fertile land, but is approached over a wide, sandy and treeless plain. From out of the howling wilderness we stepped direct into a large town, which appeared to us a veritable metropolis. Many large shops showed a splendid assortment of such glittering wares as the Chinese love—china cups and teapots, perfumes and scented soap, silks and cottons, clocks and hair-clasps. The tailors sat at their shop doors working Singers' sewing-machines, the Moslem bakers piled the hot rolls on counters as they drew them out of the brick oven, and the vege-

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tables were finer even than those of Hami. One street was given up to the furriers, who worked in rather showy but inferior skins, the best quality not finding its way to Kucheng. Another street held the silversmiths, while here and there a photographer or watchmaker advertised himself as being the branch shop of a Peking firm. The whole business quarter was gay and prosperous, but the Turki shops were fewer in number and inferior to the Chinese. The importance of Kucheng lies in the fact that it is situated at the terminus of the great desert trade-route to Peking, which passes by the Yellow River to Paotowchen and Kweihwating. These two important marts of North Shansi are 1500 miles from Kucheng, and the camel caravans habitually travel to and fro carrying the highly-prized bazaar wares over the desert. In normal times the camels are always on the move, though they may take from three to six months to accomplish the journey, but at the time of our visit this route was closed owing to the activity of the War Lords. We were told that whereas before 1914 the British and German goods were the most highly valued on the market, at the present time Russian and Japanese wares had superseded them. It was interesting to find, however, that the Moslem woman's veil which we desired to buy bore a stamp in the corner: 'Made in Manchester.' We stayed in a Mohammedan inn, where we had the immediate *entrée* to the women's quarters, in which our landlord's wives lived in seclusion. The family was very strict in its observance of Islamic rites, and five times a day the prayer-hour was observed. Every morning before sunrise and at evening twilight a long and elaborate liturgy was recited by the head of the house. The purifications which preceded the prayer entailed a washing of face, hands, arms and feet in running water.

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563 refused by the Chinese authorities, as also a suggestion
361 that the building of the Russian Orthodox Church should be turned into a theatre. In the shops of this quarter there may be bought Russian bread, cakes and biscuits; also Russian boots, foreign cloth and galvanised pails and buckets of all kinds.

•366 In another part of the town are streets of good Chinese shops, and here every variety of tinned food can be purchased, at prices which amply compensate the merchant for his trouble in the transit. The
563 Urumchi crowd presents special features which to us
492 were of absorbing interest. We were in a country where horsemanship is highly valued. The Mongol, Tibetan, Qazaq and Tungan are all splendid riders, though each has his own unmistakable style of handling a horse, and his own way of controlling it. The Russians and Siberians use Russian horses—fine-skinned, tall, and elegant—in contrast with the rough, shaggy Mongol pony, or the half tamed steed of the Tungan, who loves to gallop down the narrow streets,
563 scattering the populace as he goes. It was now that
291 we became familiar with the Qazaq—a broad-shouldered
492 man, whose burly build is exaggerated by the wadded or fur garments he wears both summer and winter alike. His home-made, high-heeled, tall leather boots were different in cut from those of the Mongolian, and his head-gear is a high-pointed cap, with a circular flap over each ear and on the shoulders. He was often seen riding a bullock, whose enormous flanks were surmounted by a small, wooden saddle, held in place by a
563 wide girth. When shopping he seldom dismounted,
437 but conducted his bargaining from his seat, and though he might know nothing of the Chinese language, the price was fixed by means of movements of the fingers, the buyer and seller each introducing his hand up the other's sleeve.

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during which we travelled. Earlier in the summer the Manas and other rivers constitute a real peril. The cold in Turkestan and Southern Siberia in early winter increases the hardship of the way, and when the spring thaw sets in, the roads around Urumchi are sometimes impassable for weeks, owing to mud-pits which are so extensive that no cart can negotiate them.

CHAPTER XLIII

ARRIVAL AT CHUGUCHAK

On September 2nd we sighted Hsihu. It is an important town surrounded by a considerable area of irrigated land, where was the junction of the Ili and Chuguchak main roads. The place presented the usual aspect of a central point used by farmers as a market. The streets were very countrified; nevertheless large sums of money pass from hand to hand between the grain merchants and their customers. There were the usual bazaars, fruit and vegetable vendors, and general shops where travellers might buy a pail, basin, towel, soap, or cigarettes, while herbalists showed a dusty store of rhubarb, cardamoms, liquorice, fennel, cloves, and ginger. The inns were crowded with caravans travelling to Ili, or arriving from Siberia. Knowing that even by tarantass we should not reach Chuguchak for another ten days, and that on leaving this fertile land we should pass through a barren country providing neither fruit nor vegetables, we loaded up once more with cucumbers, melons, and grapes, and late in the evening a vine-grower appeared carrying a basket of splendid fruit freshly cut, on which we all feasted for several days. A long stage of sixty miles, the latter part of which was over a sandy waste between tamarisk